

For Immediate Release
February 2, 2023

Contact: Deborah Lopez, DCFS
312-937-0050

Illinois DCFS offers college scholarships to current and former youth in care ***DCFS Scholarship Program applications accepted until March 31***

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is currently accepting applications for the 2023 DCFS Scholarship Program. Through the program, a minimum of 53 academic scholarships will be awarded to current and former youth in care for the upcoming school year, with four awards reserved for the children of veterans.

Scholarship recipients receive up to five consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state community colleges and public universities, a monthly grant of \$1,506 to offset other expenses and a medical card. On average, the department receives 200 application packets each year, and has awarded over 1,500 scholarships since the program began in 1971.

“Students who have been involved in the foster care system face a unique set of challenges from a young age that often set them at a disadvantage when it comes to funding their education,” said **Governor JB Pritzker**. “The DCFS Scholarship Program gives current and former youth in care the opportunity to plan for their future without incurring crippling debt or working long hours that distract from their schooling. It’s a necessary step towards building equity for all our Illinois students regardless of their family background.”

“It’s our mission to provide our youth in care with the resources and support they need to succeed as they prepare to enter adulthood,” said **Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith**. “These scholarships will help ease the burden of paying for school and allow them to focus on their studies and plan for their futures.”

The DCFS Scholarship Program is available to youth who have an open DCFS case, whose cases were closed through adoption or guardianship or who aged out of care at 18 or older. Youth who are at least 16 years old and not yet 21 on March 31 may apply.



"This scholarship has allowed me to reduce my work hours so I can stay focused on school and on getting good grades," said Rileigh, a 2022 scholarship recipient. "With this scholarship I'm able to pay my bills, buy groceries, make my car payment and afford other necessities."

2022 scholarship recipient Chloe adds, "The DCFS scholarship gives us an opportunity to show that the circumstances we were given are not the circumstances that have to define our future success."

Scholarship recipients are selected based on their scholastic record and aptitude, community and extracurricular activities, three letters of recommendation from non-relatives and a personal essay illustrating their purpose for higher education.

Applications are available at any DCFS regional office and on the DCFS website:

www2.illinois.gov/dcfs (Form CFS 438 under DCFS Features on the homepage). Students or caregivers may call the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 217-557-2689 or email DCFS.Scholarship@illinois.gov with questions about the application process or for more information.

***About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing guardianship or adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*

###